

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 7391

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL UDORN NIACT IMMEDIATE

CINCPAC

DIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 16037

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, TH

SUBJECT: SITREP AS OF 2330 LOCAL TIME; THANOM ANNOUNCES SUPPORT
FOR NEW PRIME MINISTER

REF: A. FBIS BANGKOK D141251Z OCT 73

B. FBIS BANGKOK D141333Z OCT 73

C. BANGKOK 16035

D. BANGKOK 16033

1. THE KING SPOKE OVER NATIONAL TELEVISION AT 1930, AND LATER
OVER THE RADIO, TO ANNOUNCE THE CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT (TEXT
CARRIED REF A). A RESIGNATION STATEMENT FROM FORMER PRIME
MINISTER THANOM WAS READ OVER TELEVISION AND RADIO ABOUT
2000 (TEXT CARRIED REF B). JUDGE SANYA, THE NEW PRIME MINISTER,
SPOKE OVER TELEVISION AT 2315. HE URGED ALL THAI--POLICE,
MILITARY, AND STUDENTS--TO RESORT TO PEACE. HE PROMISED
A NEW CONSTITUTION WITHIN SIX MONTHS, THE ELECTION OF REPRESENTATIVES,
AND THE EARLY FORMATION OF A CABINET.

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TATIVES, AND THE EARLY FORMATION OF A CABINET.

2. VIOLENCE NEVERTHELESS CONTINUES. SEVERAL THOUSAND STUDENTS WERE CROSSING THE MEMORIAL BRIDGE FROM THONBURI AS OF 2300, AND WERE IN SHARP CONFRONTATION WITH THE POLICE. BANDS ARE STILL ROAMING THE AREA NEAR THE DEMOCRACY MONUMENT, AND SETTING FIRE TO CARS. THERE IS SPORADIC FIRING, AND SOME POLICE STATIONS HAVE REPORTED THAT THEY ARE "UNDER ATTACK." METROPOLITAN POLICE HEADQUARTERS WAS BEING HIT WITH GRENADES, AUTOMATIC WEAPONS, AND MOLOTOV COCKTAILS AS OF 2230.

3. ESTIMATES OF DEAD AND WOUNDED HAVE VARIED CONSIDERABLY AND ARE NOT YET VERIFIABLE. WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE TO CONTRADICT THE KING'S STATEMENT THAT SOME 100 THAI HAVE BEEN KILLED. EMBASSY LOCAL EMPLOYEES HAVE SEEN SOME 55 WOUNDED STUDENTS IN THREE CITY HOSPITALS. WE HAVE NO REPORTS OF ANY AMERICAN CITIZENS BEING EITHER WOUNDED OR KILLED, OR EVEN INVOLVED IN THE SITUATION. THE SCHOOLS THAT AMERICANS ATTEND HAVE BEEN CLOSED FOR MONDAY, OCTOBER 15, AND WE HAVE REPEATEDLY DISSEMINATED THE WORD FOR ALL AMERICANS TO STAY INSIDE TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT POSSIBLE.

4. ASIDE FROM THE SO FAR UNYIELDING BUT OTHERWISE PACIFIC STUDENT OCCUPATION OF THE GOVERNOR'S HEADQUARTERS IN CHIENGMAI, STUDENTS ARE POSING NO PROBLEMS UP COUNTRY THIS EVENING. THERE IS NO INTERRUPTION OF ROUTINE AT U.S. TENANTED BASES IN THAILAND.

5. THE AMBASSADOR HAS SENT A PERSONAL NOTE TO JUDGE SANYA. THE NOTE OFFERS, AS A FRIEND, TO BE OF ANY ASSISTANCE SHOULD THE NEW PRIME MINISTER CALL. (TEXT FOLLOWS SEPTEL).

6. COMMENT: AS OF NOW WE HAVE NO CONCRETE EVIDENCE AS TO WHAT THE MILITARY POSTURE WILL BE OTHER THAN THANOM'S STATEMENT IN RESIGNING FROM THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP IN WHICH HE URGED CO-OPERATION WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. HE REPEATED THIS TIME THEME WHEN SPEAKING AS SUPREME COMMANDER SHORTLY BEFORE MID-NIGHT. THANOM HAS YET TO RENDER HIS RESIGNATION AS SUPREME COMMANDER, AND IT IS TOO EARLY TO TELL WHETHER THE MILITARY WILL ACCEPT AS LAWFUL THE INSTRUCTIONS THAT SANYA MAY GIVE.

7. EVEN THE STUDENTS WHO WERE SO ARDENTLY CAMPAIGNING FOR THE PROMULGATION OF A NEW CONSTITUTION, AND ULTIMATELY FOR A CONFIDENTIAL

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GOVERNMENT THAT IN THEIR EYES WOULD BE MORE DEMOCRATIC AND RESPONSIVE THAN THANOM'S, COULD NOT HAVE FORSEEN WITHIN A WEEK OF PROTEST THE RESIGNATION OF THE PRIME MINISTER. SANYA, WHOM THE KING HAS APPOINTED IN HIS PLACE, IS AN HONORABLE AND DISTINGUISHED SEXAGENARIAN WHOM THE STUDENTS AND THE KING RESPECT. LIKE THE POPE, HE HAS NO DIVISIONS, HOWEVER. THE NEXT FEW DAYS AND WEEKS SHOULD ENTAIL CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL JOCKEYING AND POSSIBLE INTERNAL INSTABILITY AS THE NEW GOVERNMENT

TAKES SHAPE. OF PRIME INTEREST WILL BE HOW THE MILITARY ACCEPTS THEIR LESSENERED ROLE.

8. SANYA IS CLEARLY FUNCTIONING FOR THE KING WHO HAS TAKEN AN ACTIVE AND UNUSUALLY EXPOSED ROLE IN THE CURRENT CRISIS.

THE KING IS CALLING THE TUNE IN THAILAND, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING. WE WOULD EXPECT SANYA TO SUPPORT A CONTINUATION OF THE BASIC THAI FOREIGN POLICY OF THE PAST TWO DECADES. HIS APPOINTMENT SHOULD SPELL NO ADVERSE AFFECT ON OUR INTERESTS IN THAILAND.

9. A FACTOR OF CONSIDERABLE SIGNIFIGANCE IS THE UNCHARACTERISTIC INTRODUCTION OF VIOLENCE INTO THE THAI POLITICAL SCENE. THE PEOPLE OF BANGKOK ARE REVOLTED BY THE SIGHT AND STORIES OF THE SLAUGHTER OF THE NOT ENTIRELY INNOCENT BUT LARGELY DEFENSELESS STUDENTS. FOR MANY, THE DISLIKE OF PRAPHAT HAS SHIFTED OUT OF THE ABSTRACT INTO THE PERSONAL. THE ENMITY THAT THE THAI MILITARY HAVE CREATED IN A SINGLE DAY, WHATEVER THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THEIR ACTION, IS LIKELY TO HAUNT THEM FOR SOME TIME.

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